



*On Behalf of Anne Bloxom, Division Director, Children and Family Services:*

Dear Caregiver,

Given the public health emergency caused by the COVID-19 pandemic and the proclamation of a state of emergency by federal and state officials, the Social Services Agency (SSA) has been exploring necessary measures to protect and preserve the public and prevent transmission of COVID-19 within the County of Orange. We recognize our resource families and residential care providers as vital partners to ensuring safety, stability, and permanency for our foster youth, and that the current pandemic presents unforeseen challenges to your ongoing support of these vulnerable youth.

SSA appreciates your continued commitment to the health and welfare of the youth in your care. At this time, we want to inform you of some adjustments that will impact visitation for youth in your care.

**Effective immediately**, with limited exceptions, all court-ordered *In-Person* visitation for foster youth is temporarily suspended. This temporary suspension will remain in effect through the end-of-day, **March 31, 2020**.

During the period of time *In-Person* visits are suspended, every effort should be made to facilitate frequent visitation via teleconferencing (e.g., FaceTime, Facebook Messenger, WhatsApp, etc.) or by telephone. If you lack the necessary equipment or technology to facilitate such visits, please advise your assigned social worker as soon as possible.

Please note the following exceptions to the suspension on *In-Person* visitation:

- In limited circumstances, when appropriate, social workers have discretion to arrange *In-Person* visitation, in compliance with Social Distancing directives. Your social worker will be contacting you in these situations.
- Social workers may authorize caregivers and parents to coordinate *In-Person* visitation, provided it can be accomplished safely, willingly and in compliance with Social Distancing directives. Prior to each visit occurring, if you observe that either the child or parent appears to be ill, you are advised to cancel the visit, and to immediately notify the social worker of the cancelled visit.

If your home is a confidential placement, please discuss these arrangements with your social worker.

SSA is committed to supporting and strengthening permanent family connections for all youth in foster care; however, these temporary measures need to be put into place to protect the health and safety of foster youth, their families and caregivers, and the general public, which remains our highest priority.